

Reconsideration is respectfully requested of the rejection of Claims 9-10 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hare et al. (US 6,084,638) in view of Ely et al..

Walker describes an experiment, The Mirror, between BT Laboratories, Illuminations, the BBC and Sony that gave public access to series of six virtual worlds over the Internet. The Mirror comprised six multi-user on-line worlds which reflected a broadcast multimedia magazine series "The Net" (Introduction, paragraph 2; Technical Background, paragraph 1). The audience or "citizens" could register and then were represented in a 3D environment by characters or avatars. They could move around, converse and interact in a common context of information and applications (Shared Spaces, first paragraph). The Inhabited TV was delivered over the public Internet and was in parallel to the conventional broadcast on TV (Technical background, first paragraph).

Ely et al. discloses a broadband system comprising a broadband switch network, a broadband session controller and a broadband service control point. The broadband switch network provides connections between a plurality of information senders/receivers in response to requests originated from an information sender/receiver. The broadband system enables various services. A user can select services using a menu with selection buttons such as conventional broadcast, VOD or videoconferencing (col. 10, 1.6-13).

Hare et al. discloses a system which permits the user interface of a PC to be extended to the location of a remote television receiver such that video and audio signals generated by the PC may be viewed and heard on the remote TV receiver, and users at the TV receiver may control the operations of the PC

through input devices located at the TV receiver (abstract). Hare also discloses a conferencing application. A user located at the TV receiver can command the PC to execute a video conferencing application which then provides video signals generated by the PC from data received over the network (e.g. the Internet or public switched telephone network) and provides related audio output to the user over a speaker or a telephone. As a return signal for the video conference, the user may speak through a telephone and locally generate video signals by a video camera for transmission to other participants of the video conference (col. 11, 1.49-59).

Regarding Claim 1, the Examiner mentions in the third paragraph of the Office Action that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify Walker by displaying a menu as disclosed in Ely et al including a plurality of services, e.g. broadcast TV and videoconferencing to viewers in order to provide viewers the selection of broadband services in an execution environment quickly and efficiently. Walker discloses six multi-user on-line worlds which reflect the broadcast TV programs (Introduction). The Mirror experiment as described in Walker comprises two separate viewers' environments: a first environment for the conventional broadcast of the TV programs and a second environment for the delivery of the six virtual worlds over the Internet to the user's PCs. The first environment or first mode is available on the viewers' television sets. The second environment or second mode is available on the viewers' PCs 24 hours a day. The two environments may be available simultaneously. Walker neither mentions nor suggests switching between the two technically distinct environments or modes. Thus, modifying Walker by

enabling switching between the two modes would not have been obvious to one ordinarily skilled in the art.

It is respectfully submitted that independent Claim 1 is patentable over Walker in view of Ely et al. It is also respectfully submitted that dependent Claims 2-6 are patentable over Walker in view of Ely et al at least based on their dependencies.

Regarding Claim 7, Applicant acknowledges the Examiner statement that Ely does not specifically disclose triggering formation of group end users for conferencing upon an event relating to the broadcasting. In addition, in contrary to the Examiner's statement, Walker neither mentions nor suggest videoconferencing or audience interaction between the audiences via television network to provide viewers social chat service to enhance the television system. Walker discloses six multi-users on-line worlds which reflect the broadcast material (Introduction). Walker does not disclose multi-user virtual environments via television network. Thus, Walker does not disclose the Claim limitation of the server enabling the broadcast of content information and comprising a trigger unit for triggering formation of at least one group of end users upon an event relating to the broadcasting.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that independent Claim 7 is patentable over Ely et al in view of Walker. It is also respectfully submitted that dependent Claim 8 is patentable over Walker in view of Ely et al at least based on its dependency.

Regarding Claim 9, Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's statement that Hare does not specifically disclose

the claim limitation of "the apparatus is operative under to selectively control switching the apparatus between making accessible to user the broadcast or making accessible to the user a real time communication channel with another client in response to receipt a control signal from the server". Ely describes a menu including selections for various services such as broadcast TV and videoconferencing. The user makes the selection and triggers the service. In the invention, the receipt of the control signal from the server triggers the apparatus being operative to selectively control switching the apparatus. Neither Hareb et al nor Ely et al discloses such receipt of the control signal from the server and the apparatus being operative to selectively control the switching the apparatus in response to receipt of the control signal.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that independent Claim 9 is patentable over Hare et al. in view of Ely et al. It is also respectfully submitted that dependent Claim 10 is patentable over Hare et al. in view of Ely et al. at least based on its dependency.

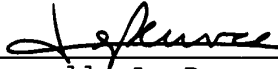
Applicants respectfully submit that they have answered all issues raised by the Examiner and that the application is accordingly in condition for allowance. Such allowance is therefore respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

Dated: November 14, 2001

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